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Closing likely for landfill in Edison

By JAMES WARREN

An agreement to finally close the controversial Kin-Buc landfill in Edison may come this morning, during an on-site inspection by state, local and landfill officials.

A joint hearing of the Public Utilities Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection adjourned yesterday after an apparently conciliatory move by the landfill's attorney, inviting engineers from the DEP and Middlesex County to check the 40-acre area and then discuss a timetable for shutdown.

DEP ordered the landfill closed July 8 but a later accord between the state and Scientific Inc., of Scotch Plains, the Kin-Buc operators, allowed continued dumping of solid wastes. The purpose of the joint hearing was to determine whether to permanently close the landfill.

Theodore Schwartz, counsel for Scientific Inc., said "there was no use spending a lot of time in hearings" if an outside settlement could be reached. He reiterated his client's wish to "close the dump anyway," though disagreeing with various state plans for a shutdown.

DEP feels the closing should be effected in 30 days, while Schwartz thinks six months is a more realistic cutoff date. The state, however, quickly accepted the invitation to a 10 a.m. inspection.

Hearing examiner Harold Kaplan will accompany the entourage but will not take part in discussions concerning an attempted settlement. Kaplan asked for a report tomorrow morning on results of the talks. If no agreement is reached, the formal hearings will resume.

DEP originally ordered New Jersey's only chemical landfill closed for "continuing violations of the state's environmental standards." Kin-Buc was cited for various violations including seepage of leachate from the site into the Raritan River.

Even if the battle over closing ends shortly, a new dispute, over expansion of Kin-Buc, will take over. Scientific Inc. has presented plans for Kin-Buc II and Kin-Buc III, a new chemical landfill and processing facility adjacent to the present dump, and the DEP has given conditional approval.

Middlesex County environmental officials have protested the plan but the matter will be moot if Gov. Brendan T. Byrne signs a measure already passed by the Legislature. The bill, introduced by Sen. Bernard Dwyer (D-Middlesex), would ban dumping near major bodies of water, effectively scotching any Kin-Buc expansion.